A

SERMON

PREACH'D

AT

Patrixbourne and *Bridge.*

By JOHN BOWTELL, D. D.

---- *Abraham ſhall ſurely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth ſhall be bleſſed in him; for I know him that he will command his children, and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath ſpoken of him.* Gen. xviii. 18, 19.

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MDCCLI.

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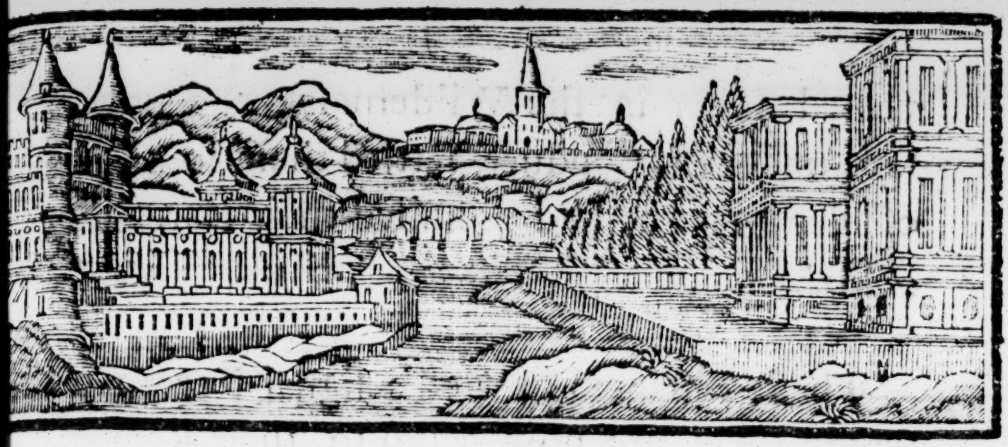
THESE are the Words of *Joſhua* to the Children of *Iſrael*, after he had divided to them by Lot thoſe Nations, that were to be an Inheritance for their ſeveral Tribes, as Almighty God had before determined.

Joſhua himſelf now in Years, and about to leave this World, calls them together, and declares what wondreful Inſtances of Love, and Mercy God had frequently ſhown them; how he had choſen them from amongſt the Heathen to be his People; how he had delivered them from the Slavery which they had long groaned under in the Land of *Egypt*; how he made a Way for them thro' the Red Sea, and ſup-



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ported them in the Wilderneſs; and now at laſt, under his Conduct, ſettled them in a Land of Plenty, as he had promiſed their Forefather *Abraham*.

Theſe Inſtances of God's ſignal Favour towards them are now call'd to their Remembrance; to diſpoſe them for their Duty, and to confirm them in it; to provoke them to a hearty and ſincere Acknowledgment of his gracious Diſpenſations towards them; and at the ſame Time to inſtruct them, where to place their Confidence, and under whoſe Protection alone they might dwell ſafely;

And by what Means they might ſecure themſelves from being ſeduc'd by thoſe idolatrous Neighbours, which God ſtill ſuffer'd to remain amongſt them; and wou'd always be ſure to meet with ſufficient Encouragement from the Bleſſings, which that inexhauſtible Fountain of Goodneſs has in Store for all them, that with faithful and true Hearts turn unto him.

He tells them at the ſame Time how fatal their Misbehaviour wou'd be in this Caſe, and how dreadful the Conſequence of their following

lowing after ſtrange Gods; andendeavours by his own good Example to fix them in their Duty, and makes an open Declaration to them all of this his pious Reſolution,—*As for me and my Houſe we will ſerve the Lord.*

1. Theſe Words may lead us to conſider, that we have the greateſt Reaſon to ſerve God always in the firſt Place; whether we look upon our own Neceſſities, which can never be ſupply'd but by him, or whether we reflect upon thoſe many Inſtances of his Bounty and Goodneſs, that attend us every Day.

2. That we are to have a due Regard for them, that are under our Care; to put them in Mind, and by our own Example to encourage them in the firſt Place always to diſcharge their Duty towards God.

3. And what will beſt recommend our religious Worſhip to God, and in what Manner it ought to be perform'd.

1. That we ought to ſerve God, is a Propoſition of itſelf ſo reaſonable, that no one, who believes there is ſuch a Being, and conſiders

the Relation and Diſtance there is betwixt him and his Creatures, can doubt of it.

For 'twas God, who at firſt brought all Things out of Nothing. *Heb.* xi. 3. Who, as his Holy Prophet has taught us, created the Heavens, and ſtretched them out, who ſpread forth the Earth, and that which cometh out of it; that giveth Breath unto the People upon it, and Spirit to them that walk therein. *Iſ.* xlii. 5.

'Tis he that has made us, ſays the Pſalmiſt, and not we ourſelves; and by the ſame Almighty Power ſtill preſerves us; his Providence extends itſelf to every Circumſtance of Life, and not a Hair can fall from our Head without his Knowledge; all Things are by his infinite Wiſdom diſpoſed into ſuch an Order, as beſt ſuits his Goodneſs and our Happineſs. Great is our Lord, and great is his Power, yea and his Wiſdom is infinite.

We cannot ſubſiſt one Moment but by the Power and Aſſiſtance he gives us; neither can we enjoy the Pleaſures of this Life with any tolerable Satisfaction, before he has taught us how to make uſe of them; in him we live, move, and have our Being. Our Dependance

is wholly upon him; 'tis God that preſerves our Life from Deſtruction, that crowns us with Mercy and loving Kindneſs; that delivers us out of all our Fears, and comforts us in all our Troubles; the greateſt Bleſſings, and the moſt excellent Gifts, are the Effects of his gracious Diſpenſation towards us;

As our Reaſon teaches us to be grateful for theſe Mercies, ſo our Religion directs us in what Manner, and to whom we ſhou'd pay our Acknowledgments for them;

We are to worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth, *i. e.* fervently and without Hypocriſy; we are to offer up our Praiſes to that God, to whom Power belongeth, whoſe Promiſes, full of Goodneſs and Comfort to us his ſinful Creatures, are *Yea* and *Amen*.

We are weak in ourſelves, and frequently made uneaſy by our Circumſtances, encompaſſed with Infirmities, liable to Temptations, and ſubject to a Thouſand Accidents, any one of which may be ſufficient to overwhelm us with Grief, or caſt us into Diſorder and Confuſion; and is it not our Intereſt then, as well as our Duty, to fly for Succour to him who has

has commanded us to call upon him in Time of Trouble? *So will I hear thee,* ſays God, *and thou ſhall praiſe me.*

We are deſirous of Happineſs, and at the ſame Time are convinc'd, 'tis out of our Reach; we are not able, I mean, of ourſelves to compaſs what we ſo much deſire, but muſt depend upon him who alone is able to ſave and to defend us: Here then we have a ſufficient Motive to take Care that we lead a religious Life, this being the only Way to ſecure to ourſelves the Favour of God, who is himſelf an inexhauſtible Fountain of Joy and Pleaſure, and has promiſed to reward our Services here with eternal Glory and Happineſs in another World.

But we are often diſturb'd with Fears and Jealouſies, with Doubts and Deſpondencies, with the terrible Approaches of Death, and the dreadful Apprehenſions of a future Judgment; becauſe of that Guilt we have contracted by our Sins and Diſobedience againſt the Divine Will.

Now, as we are Sinners, to whom ſhou'd we apply ourſelves for Relief and Comfort, but

but to him that died for our Sins? Where may we venture to repoſe our Truſt, to place our greateſt Confidence, but in a tender and merciful and moſt compaſſionate God and Saviour, who wou'd have all Men to be ſav'd, and who has aſſur'd us, that whoſoever cometh to him, he will in no wiſe caſt him out?

And ſince it is he that preſides over the whole Creation, and governs and diſpoſes all Things here amongſt us, and has manifeſtly declar'd for our Encouragement, that he is always ready and willing to take into his Protection thoſe Servants of his that call upon him with a faithful and true Heart, how unreaſonable wou'd it be for us, and fooliſh in the higheſt Degree, not to devote ourſelves intirely to his Service!

2. But ſuch Conſiderations as theſe ſhou'd not only prevail with us to diſcharge thoſe Duties that immediately relate to our own particular Intereſt only, and that Happineſs which we hope to enjoy ourſelves; but ſhould inſpire us, every one of us, with ſo much Charity for others, as to inſtruct them, to exhort and aſſiſt them towards their Attainment of everlaſting Salvation.

And

And whereſoever Religion may be urg'd and encourag'd the more for the Authority we have over ſuch as we call upon to mind it; ſo much the more inexcuſible we ſhall be, if we neglect to exert it; ſo neceſſary is it to imitate holy *Joſhua* in his pious Reſolution; for every Chriſtian that has Authority over others, to ſee that they have a juſt Regard to the Commandments of God, and that they pay a due Obedience to his Divine Will; this he requires at their Hands, that they inſiſt upon his Worſhip, his Honour, and Reverence to his Holy Name, and to his Word, with all thoſe that he has plac'd under their Care and Command; and that they ſuffer no Blaſphemy, Prophaneneſs, or Immorality, no ſcandalous or unchriſtian Practices in any, over whom their Authority is extended; much leſs in their own Family.

But what then are we to think of thoſe wicked Parents, who themſelves having no Regard for their Duty either to God or Man, train up their Children in the ſame profligate Courſe of Life with themſelves, of which we have too many freſh and ſcandalous Inſtances amongſt us.

How

How can the Fear of God affect that Man, who ſuffers his Child or Servant to prophane that ſacred Name, or to blaſpheme his holy Religion, and to purſue their lewd and deteſtable Practices, without expreſſing himſelf towards them in ſuch a Manner as a juſt Indignation and Abhorrence of thoſe Sins wou'd oblige him to.

This therefore Governours are to endeavour throughout their reſpective Governments, ſubordinate Magiſtrates in their proper Limits, and every Houſholder in his Family, and every one that is left in Truſt in their own reſpective Capacity; for 'tis a dangerous Miſtake in ſuch to think they have done enough, and ſufficiently diſcharged their Conſcience towards God, when they have neglected thoſe that are ſubject to them, and have done no more than each private Chriſtian ſhou'd have done.

Authority has a mighty Influence over the Mind of Man, and will oftentimes more effectually prevail than Intereſt or Reaſon; ſuch therefore as God has plac'd in a higher Station, and inveſted with greater Power, are the more oblig'd to promote his Honour, by anſwering all the Ends of the Chriſtian Inſtitution.

For don't we all ſee that when the Dictates of our own Reaſon, ſuch Reflexions as we allow ourſelves to make; when our preſent Intereſt, when the Hopes of eternal Happineſs on the one Hand, and the Fears of everlaſting Miſery on the other, have no Influence upon our Lives, that even then the Dread of Authority, the Threatning of a Superiour, the Apprehenſion of preſent temporal Puniſhment, often proves effectual to the reclaiming Men from their evil Ways?

And then if ſuch as are thus above us improve their Authority, and draw Reſpect from us by their own good Example, as it quickens our Endeavours, and confirms us in our Duty; ſo it muſt create in them abundance of Pleaſure to ſee that the Means they made uſe of, and the Pattern they have ſet us, have had ſo good an Effect.

Thus did *Joſhua*, and thus he ſucceeded; he reaſon'd with the *Iſraelites*, and threaten'd them if they revolted from their Duty; and at the ſame Time confirm'd them in it. *Now therefore*, ſays he, *fear the Lord, and ſerve him in Sincerity and Truth; as for me and my Houſe*

Houſe we will ſerve the Lord.—And the People cry'd out, *God forbid that we ſhould forſake the Lord, we will alſo ſerve the Lord, for he is our God.*

Which brings me to conſider in the next Place what it is to ſerve the Lord; what will beſt recommend our religious Worſhip to God, and in what Manner it ought to be perform'd.

In order to make all our Services acceptable in the Sight of God, they are to be attended with Faith, Hope, and Charity. The Holy Apoſtle tells us, that he who cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of all thoſe that diligently ſeek him: 'Tis by Faith we have Acceſs to him, and by Faith that we are ſav'd; and we may ſee how thoſe three Acts of Faith in the Holy Patriarch leaving his Friends, relying upon the Promiſe of a Son, and then his being ready to offer him up, recommended him to the Favour and Protection of Almighty God; and now it muſt be our Faith in Chriſt, that recommends us to him;

For our Prayers, our Alms, all our Religious Duties are to no Purpoſe, if they be not

grounded upon that: And ſo it is if we are deſtitute of Hope; for to what End ſhou'd that Man importune Almighty God with repeated Addreſſes every Day, that expects not to obtain the Forgiveneſs of his Sins, and all other Benefits that he has promiſed us in his Son Jeſus Chriſt:

And as to the other Divine Grace of Charity, the Holy Scripture is full of preſſing Arguments to recommend it; there we may read how neceſſary, and how excellent the Practice of it is, and ſhall therefore find no Duty in Chriſtianity more frequently recommended, or more ſtrictly injoin'd.

Above all things, ſays St. *Peter*, *have fervent Charity among your ſelves*; 1 Pet. iv. 8. And St. *Paul*, after he had been recommending other Duties to the *Coloſſians*, adds, -- And *above all theſe things put on Charity, which is the bond of perfectneſs*; Col. iii. xiv. And, as if the whole Law of God were compriz'd in this Duty, he tells us, That *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*; Rom. xiii. 10. And is yet more expreſs to the *Galatians*, ch. v. 14. *All the Law is fulfill'd in one word, even in this--- Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf*: And

And assures the *Corinthians*, that all those spiritual Gifts and extraordinary Endowments, by which God had distinguished him from others, cou'd be no Advantage or Blessing to himself without Charity: And he instances in those two Duties, that one wou'd think cou'd not be seperated from a true Zeal for the Glory of God, and an undissembled Affection and Compassion for such as are in Necessity.

And tho' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and tho' I give my Body to be burn'd, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing. And a little after he says --- And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity.

And to take those Measures that Charity wou'd direct us to observe, is a necessary Qualification for them that wou'd offer up an acceptable Sacrifice to Almighty God; for by this Grace, we are to understand an universal Disposition throughout our whole Life and Conversation to honour God; to love our Neighbour, and conscientiously to discharge the Duties of Temperance, Meekness, and Contentment, with regard to our selves; 'tis indeed

indeed to frame our Lives to the Precepts of the Goſpel in every Reſpect, which requires ſuch a Mind in us as was in Chriſt Jeſus; to do good to all Men; to love them that hate us, and to pray for even ſuch as deſpitefully uſe us.

This is the Temper of Chriſtians; of ſuch as are led on by Charity, and who may therefore with good Hopes approach the Throne of Grace: For by this Men ſhall know them to be Chriſt's Diſciples, if they keep his Commandments, and have Love one for another.

But beſides the foremention'd Graces, in all our Service we muſt add Sincerity; the Homage we pay to God muſt be pure and unmix'd, without Partiality and without Hypocriſy; God will ſuffer no Rival in the Heart, nor part with his Glory to another, he requires the whole Man as a lively Sacrifice; and 'tis but a reaſonable Service to devote our Souls and Bodies intirely to his Pleaſure who at firſt created them;

He clearly diſcerns the Bent of every Man's Heart, and hates the double-minded, thoſe that are wavering and unſtable; and has there-

fore

fore made uſe of all the propereſt Arguments to eſtabliſh ſuch fluctuating Souls, as are apt to ſerve God or Baal, juſt as their preſent temporal Intereſt calls them. But Chriſt has told us, That no Man can ſerve two Maſters; for as he inclines to one, he will neglect the other; ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon: What Communion has Light with Darkneſs; or what Concord has Chriſt with Belial?

Another Thing that muſt come in to make up a proper and ſuitable Service, is that of a Chriſtian Zeal: Not that which burns outragiouſly, and betrays Men into imprudent and unaccountable Actions; but that which in a juſt and becoming Aſſurance, and a true Spirit of Piety, conducted with Prudence and Courage, labours to ſtop the Current of Lewdneſs, Prophaneſs, and Atheiſm.

Phineas is recorded among thoſe that were honour'd in their Generations; and were the Glory of their Times, for appearing with Zeal and Courage in the Cauſe of God and Religion, againſt thoſe ſcandalous Practices of the *Iſraelites*, which brought down ſuch dreadful Judgments upon them; as we read of at large in the xxvth Chapter of the Book of *Numbers*.

Now,

Now, that which rais'd his Indignation was to ſee God diſhonour'd by the Lewdneſs, and Prophaneſs of an ungrateful People: That thoſe, whom God had honour'd above the reſt of Mankind, and call'd his own peculiar People, and had done ſo many Wonders in their Favour to preſerve them from their Enemies, and crown them with Bleſſings, ſhou'd in ſuch a vile ſtupid manner rebel againſt him, and give up themſelves to Idolatry, and all thoſe abominable Practices that attend it, was if any thing cou'd be a ſufficient Provocation for that good Man in Authority to give ſome ſignal Inſtance of his Zeal for the Glory of God, and of his own juſt Deteſtation and Abhorrence of ſuch Wickedneſs as is there mention'd.

But as we are to be zealous for the Glory of God, ſo are we openly and publickly on all juſt Occaſions to own our ſelves his Servants, and the Diſciples of Chriſt.

There is a dreadful Curſe attending thoſe, who renounce or are aſham'd of this holy Profeſſion; *Mar.* viii. 38. And how can we perſwade others, by our own good Example,

if

if we do not, as Chriſt commands us, *Let our Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee our good Works, and glorify our Father who is in Heaven?*

Not with a vain and affected Oſtentation, boaſting of our own Performances, or Sanctity, and deſpiſing others; for then we ſhall loſe our Reward, and be number'd with the Hypocrites: But in an humble Confidence, that God will aſſiſt our pious Endeavours, and carry us thro' all our Duty, and at laſt reward our Sincerity: Supported with ſuch Hopes we may, in Imitation of holy *Joſhua*, make a publick Profeſſion, and declare to the World, that whatever the Event may be, we are ſtedfaſtly reſolv'd to ſerve the Lord.

Thus I have ſhown, that if we are deſirous of offering to God a proper and ſuitable Sacrifice; and of ſerving him after ſuch a manner, as he requires we ſhou'd, in order to make it acceptable to him; then our Religious Exerciſes muſt always be accompanied with Faith, Hope, and Charity; they muſt be ſincere and impartial, zealous and hearty, publick and exemplary.

But this is not all; for our Service muſt be conſtant; God will not be put off with ſome ſudden tranſient Fits of Devotion; we muſt be all of a Piece, equally prepar'd at all Times againſt every thing that obſtructs our Duty. There being no Promiſe of Salvation but to them that hold out and endure to the end. As the Apoſtle tells us: *For we are made partakers of Chriſt*, (*i. e.* of the Benefits which he has purchas'd for us) *if we hold the beginning of our Confidence ſtedfaſt unto the end*; *Heb.* iii. 14. And our Bleſſed Lord tells us, *He that endureth to the end ſhall be ſaved*; *Mat.* x. 22. *Mar.* xiii. 13.

He requires ſuch a Principle of Goodneſs, as may influence a Man's whole Life, all his Actions, and carry him thro' all the Difficulties of our Religious Warfare; that he may be able to ſtand faſt in the Days of Tryal, and bear with Patience the Croſſes and Afflictions of this Life; that he may behave ſteadily in the midſt of thoſe Dangers and Temptations, that Proſperity or Adverſity are frequently attended with; and chearfully follow the Captain of our Salvation thro' all the Reproaches and Contradictions of an ignorant and ſinful World; looking up unto Jeſus the Author and

and Finiſher of our Faith, who for the Joy that was ſet before him endur'd the Croſs, deſpiſing the Shame, and is now ſet down at the right Hand of the Throne of God: To whom with the Father and the ever Bleſſed Spirit, three Perſons and one God, be aſcrib'd all Honour, and Glory, now and for-evermore.

FINIS.